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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 1-27 without prejudice and insert new Claims 28-46 therefor. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-27. (Canceled)

28. (New) A process for preparing a compound of the formula 1a:

comprising:

reacting the hydrochloride salt of a compound of formula 2a:

2a

in the presence of an inorganic base,

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with a compound of the formula 3:

to produce a compound of the formula 4a:

$$CF_3$$
 H_3C_N
 CF_3
 CF_3

4a

and cyclizing the compound of formula 4a to give the compound of formula 1a.

- 29. (New) The process of Claim 28 wherein the compound of formula 2a is reacted with the compound of formula 3 in the presence of an inorganic base, toluene and a polar aprotic solvent.
- 30. (New) The process of Claim 29 wherein the polar aprotic solvent is selected from the group consisting of: dimethylformamide, dimethylsulfoxide, N-methylpyrrolidone, acetonitrile, N,N-dimethylacetamide and hexamethylphosphoramide.
- 31. (New) The process of Claim 30 wherein the polar aprotic solvent is dimethylformamide or dimethylsulfoxide

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32. (New) The process of Claim 28 wherein the inorganic base is selected from the group consisting of: sodium carbonate, cesium carbonate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide and potassium carbonate.

- 33. (New) The process of Claim 32 wherein the inorganic base is potassium carbonate.
- 34. (New) The process of Claim 28 wherein the cyclization of the compound of formula 4a is conducted at a temperature of 140-150°C.
- 35. (New) The process of Claim 28 further comprising washing the compound of formula 4a prior to cyclization with an aqueous phase.
- 36. (New) The process of Claim 35 wherein the aqueous phase is comprised of an aqueous salt solution
- 37. (New) The process of Claim 36 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains at least one compound selected from the group consisting of: KCl, KHCO₃, K₂CO₃, Na₂CO₃, NaHCO₃ and NaCl.
- 38. (New) The process of Claim 37 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains KCl.
- 39. (New) The process of Claim 28 further comprising drying prior to cyclization.

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40. (New) A process for preparing a compound of the formula 1a:

comprising:

reacting the hydrochloride salt of a compound of formula 2a:

in the presence of:

an inorganic base which is selected from the group consisting of: sodium carbonate, cesium carbonate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide and potassium carbonate;

toluene; and

a solvent which is selected from the group consisting of: dimethylformamide, dimethylsulfoxide, N-methylpyrrolidone, acetonitrile, N,N-dimethylacetamide and hexamethylphosphoramide;

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with a compound of the formula 3:

to produce a compound of the formula 4a:

$$CF_3$$
 H_3C_N
 CF_3
 CF_3

washing the compound of formula 4a with an aqueous phase; and cyclizing the compound of formula 4a at a temperature of 140-150°C to give the compound of formula 1a.

- 41. (New) The process of Claim 40 wherein the inorganic base is potassium carbonate.
- 42. (New) The process of Claim 40 wherein the solvent is dimethylformamide or dimethylsulfoxide
- 43. (New) The process of Claim 40 wherein the aqueous phase is comprised of an aqueous salt solution
- 44. (New) The process of Claim 43 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains at least one compound selected from the group consisting of: KCl, KHCO₃, K₂CO₃, Na₂CO₃, NaHCO₃ and NaCl.

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45. (New) The process of Claim 44 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains KCl.

46. (New) The process of Claim 40 further comprising drying prior to cyclization.